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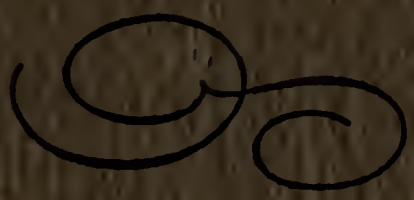
Shipbuilding
ON THE KENNEBUNK

The Closing Chapter

CHARLES S. MORGAN



PUBLICATION No. 1

of the

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KENNEBUNKPORT

Kennebunkport, Maine

1952

Shipbuilding
ON THE KENNEBUNK

The Closing Chapter

Adapted from an Address by

CHARLES S. MORGAN

to the Society on the occasion of

its first public meeting

February 15, 1952

PUBLICATION No. 1

of the

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF KENNEBUNKPORT

Kennebunkport, Maine

Historical Society of Kennebunkport

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Foreword

The Historical Society of Kennebunkport drew its initial inspiration from an illustrated address on old houses of the town which was presented last October before the Olympian Club by Mrs. Ralph Lord Smith. The thought came at once to the minds of several listeners, "There ought to be some sort of organization in this historic old town through which its annals, now available, may be preserved and interest in its accomplishments and traditions may be kept alive."

The following month a group of interested citizens met at the home of Mrs. John S. Eckler to discuss further the possibility of such an organization. Out of this meeting came the decision to establish the Historical Society of Kennebunkport. We believe that this Society will make an important contribution to the cultural development of the town and in many ways will render valuable service to both permanent residents and summer visitors. The Society has been generously described as "one of the most significant developments and one of the most important civic betterments that has ever occurred in this historically rich town." The officers and members of the Society are eager that it shall always merit this encomium.

This booklet is the first of a proposed series of publications on various aspects of our local history. A number of these are already under study and project directors have been assigned to such topics as old houses; shipbuilding, mills, fisheries and other local industry; incidents and personages; Indian history; transportation; education; ecclesiastical history; historic sites; and documentary and photographic records.

We earnestly solicit the cooperation and support of all persons who are in sympathy with the broad and worthy objectives of the Society. Membership is open to all and the cost is nominal in the extreme. Further information may be obtained from any of the officers.

MELVILLE C. FREEMA

June 12, 1952

The David Clark shipyard (formerly the Crawford & Ward shipyard) during the summer of 1901. The schooner *Savannah* is soon to be launched. At the right is Torrey's foundry where much of the iron work was forged for the vessels. In the right background may be seen the Parker House, now replaced by the Post Office.

Shipbuilding on the Kennebunk

The Closing Chapter

THIS is a brief and sketchy account of the last important chapter in the history of shipbuilding on the Kennebunk River. It will not satisfy the need for a definitive treatment of the subject but its purpose will be served if it awakens the interest of others and stimulates some local historian to undertake a complete account of the contribution of Kennebunk and Kennebunkport to our maritime history.

In point of time, this chapter embraces the period from the close of the Civil War to the turn of the century, with a few epilogic notes extending to the close of World War I. This was a period of industrial transition in our national history and insofar as shipbuilding is concerned, a period in which the Kennebunk Customs District played a significant if not a major role.

The greatest annual tonnage production by shipbuilders in the Kennebunk District occurred in 1874, when vessels aggregating 11,406 tons were launched. The best previous year had been 1854, at the height of the clipper ship era, when 7,800 tons were set afloat. The production in 1874 was augmented considerably by the launching of the magnificent four-masted bark *Ocean King* of 2,546 tons, the largest sailing vessel afloat except for a converted steamer and the first four-masted vessel since Donald McKay's celebrated clipper *Great Republic* twenty years before. This vessel was built at the shipyard of Captain N. L. Thompson under the superintendence of Master Carpenter Benjamin Jackson. Other vessels built that year included two ships, a barkentine, five three-masted schooners, and a two-masted schooner.

Courtesy of Fireman's Fund Insurance Co.

The four-masted bark *Ocean King*, seen here at San Francisco, exceeded in size all other vessels built on the Kennebunk River and at the time of her launching in 1874 was the largest sailing vessel afloat except for the former steamship *Three Brothers*.

Little has been written of the American schooner which took precedence from the famed square-rigger during the generation following the Civil War. This transition in shipbuilding was felt on the Kennebunk River no less than elsewhere along the coast where wooden shipbuilding was still carried on. Thus the final chapter of shipbuilding on the River was dominated by the schooners, though, as we have seen, several fine big square-rigged vessels were built during the '60s and '70s.

In these days when every sailing vessel from the frigate *Constitution* to Tarkington's late lamented *Regina* is loosely and wrongly referred to in the press as a clipper, it may be well to establish once and for all what a schooner

is or was and why she was that way. Stated in the fewest possible words a schooner is a sailing vessel having two or more masts on which the principal sails are set in a fore and aft direction and not suspended from yards crosswise of the vessel. This rig was early discovered to be the most convenient for coastwise sailing because of the nature of the prevailing winds, and when the economic developments occurred to produce an ever increasing demand for coastwise freight transportation, it was found that the schooner was the most economical type of vessel to build, to rig, and to operate. The economy of the schooner lay in the extreme simplicity of her rig which, on the larger vessels, permitted the use of steam winches for setting the sails and other heavy work. On a full-rigged ship there were as many as twenty-three or more sails and more than two hundred lines in the running rigging. By contrast, the maximum number of sails on a large three-masted schooner was thirteen (more often only ten) with less than fifty lines in the running rigging. The running gear on the principal sail of a fore-and-after was reduced to three major lines which might even be handled by steam power. A fair-sized three-masted schooner would carry a total complement of seven or eight whereas a ship or bark of similar tonnage would need from fifteen to twenty men.

The Ascendancy of the Schooner

THE circumstances leading up to the decline of the square-riggers and the ascendancy of the fore-and-afters have been ably summarized by Parker in his *Great Coal Schooners of New England,* a book which I heartily recommend to anyone interested in the maritime and commercial history of our country.

"The American Civil War marked the termination of the golden age of sailing ships in world trade and also the decline of the American merchant marine for more years than it is happy to recall. The reasons for this decline were several. The chief immediate cause was the failure to keep pace with the British development of steam navigation which from 1840 on began to play an important role on some of our principal foreign trade routes.

"An economic depression began in 1857 resulting in a sudden and monumental decline in foreign commerce. The Civil War followed closely and Confederate commerce raiders succeeded in destroying hundreds of vessels. . . . Insurance rates skyrocketed to such a point that thousands of vessels were laid up in northern ports and hundreds sold to foreign owners at panic prices. Between 1861 and 1866 there was a shrinkage of nearly fifty percent in the registered tonnage of the American merchant fleet.

"Much of the capital which had formerly been invested in shipping was shifted to railway building, manufacturing, and real estate. An attitude of indifference prevailed towards American shipping throughout the country.

"Maine was very poorly situated to share in the industrial expansion which swept the other shipping states. She had no raw materials except lumber and by 1865 her stand of white pine was gone. She was the most remote of the New England states from the supplies of coal, iron, and cotton, and her potential markets constantly receded as the center of the nation's population shifted ever westward.

"In the days when they had both oak and white pine, the inhabitants of the Maine coast naturally turned to shipbuilding. In the years before 1861 they had gained a considerable reputation for building vessels on contract for New York and Boston owners at a lower cost than that which prevailed in New York or Boston. And when the Civil War was over, the Maine coast had little but shipbuilding to pursue for its prosperity."[1]

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[1] W. J. L. Parker, *The Great Coal Schooners of New England* (Mystic, Conn., 1949).

With the death knell of the square-rigger in foreign commerce, Maine shipbuilders turned to the coastwise trade and its fore-and-afters for continued employment of their yards. From colonial times the coastwise trade was a vital link in our transportation system. For many years, prior to the development of highways and railroads, the only practical means of interstate transportation of bulky cargoes was by water, and for long distance passenger travel the small coasting schooners enjoyed widespread popularity. Many coastal towns in Maine were linked with Portland and Boston by regularly sailing small packet schooners.

This coastwise commerce was carried on in small two-masted fore-and-aft schooners, a rig that made its appearance in the early eighteenth century and generally credited to the American colonies. Whatever the origin of the schooner, it was at the hands of Maine shipbuilders that it reached its highest development and this during the period in which we are interested here.

> "It was a change in the composition of the coastwise sailing fleet which proved such a boon to the people who had built and operated large deepwater vessels. Prior to 1870 the sailing coaster had been a small vessel, but now, ironically enough, the same wave of industrial activity which had nearly swamped American foreign-going shipping with indifference, proved indirectly to be the salvation of the Maine shipping interests. The impact of this industrial activity upon New England after the Civil War produced bulk cargoes which called for a type of coasting schooner comparable in size to the deepwater vessels which Maine knew so well how to build; nor did Maine allow the opportunity to pass.
>
> "The new stimuli were the demands for Southern hard pine with which to build the rapidly expanding urban and suburban areas along the Atlantic coast and the demand for . . . coal."[2]

[2]Ibid.

The three-masted schooner, a Maine invention of the early nineteenth century, grew in size until in 1880 the first four-masted schooner was built at Bath. The success of these vessels coupled with the discovery that larger hulls could be sailed without proportionate increase in cost led to the construction of ever larger five-masted and six-masted schooners.

While Bath was preeminent as a schooner-building port and the Kennebunk River would take a position far down the list in terms of numbers of vessels built, the quality of the vessels built here should be cause for local pride and the experiences of many of the vessels reason enough for local interest.

Kennebunkport Turns to Schooners

THE Kennebunk River was on the wane as a shipbuilding center when the rejuvenating demand for larger schooners was felt, but it was not enough to overcome the handicaps of a vanishing local supply of ship timber and a constricted waterway. In his report on the shipbuilding industry of the United States published in connection with the 1880 census but representing several years work, Henry Hall had this to say about Kennebunkport:

> "Kennebunkport is an old shipbuilding town. It originally enjoyed the advantage of an abundance of local timber, and in the prosperous days before the War of 1861, large numbers of trading vessels of all classes were built both for Boston houses and for local owners, the cotton ships being reputed to be able to carry more cargo to the register ton than any except those built in Boston. Losses and shrinkage of values have borne heavily upon the town. Two years ago the principal builder built a bark and a ship which, in consequence of the decline of vessel property, brought $20,000 less than they had cost. Two or three large vessels a year, a few

fishing smacks and a few menhaden steamers are the average product of the town. Fishing steamers register from 70 to 130 tons and cost from $20,000 to $30,000 each. The local timber supply is now exhausted, but in the early years, about 1830 for instance, Kennebunkport could build vessels of 1000 tons and upward for $23 a ton. The price rose to $70 after 1861 and latterly has been about $55."

An additional sidelight on this period is provided by a report appearing in the New York Maritime Register of January 3, 1877.

"Shipbuilding at Kennebunk promises to be good. The low wages ranging from $1.25 to $1.75 per day encourage capitalists to invest. Capt. N. L. Thompson has one ship with her deck in and house frame up and work is going on rapidly. He is getting the frame for another. Crawford & Perkins still waiting for stock. They have under way three small fishing schooners. Charles Ward is pushing forward a small fishing schooner and a pleasure yacht. Charles Hamilton is arranging to build a fishing craft. Thompson & Titcomb have a frame coming from the South. David Clark is arranging to build a bark. When the yards are all busy about 150 men are employed."

In that year Capt. N. L. Thompson's yard turned out the ships *Vigilant* and *Pharos* and the bark *Hiram Emery.* David Clark's yard built the bark *Hannah W. Dudley.*

David Clark, Shipbuilder

ALTHOUGH during the 1870's no less than three shipyards on the Kennebunk River were building three-masted schooners, square-riggers or both, by 1880 only one yard building anything larger than fishermen remained in the field. It was David Clark who contributed most to this final chapter of large vessel construction on the Kennebunk River though his contribution to the

earlier era of square-rigged shipbuilding was by no means insignificant. His productive career embraced a period of a half century, all of it devoted to shipbuilding on the Kennebunk River. He contributed to its reputation as the birthplace of many fine square-riggers and for the last twenty years of his life, by building three-masted and four-masted schooners as well as tow-boats, fishermen and even a ferry, almost singlehandedly kept shipbuilding on the River alive, so far as large vessel construction is concerned. Of the many distinguished shipbuilders mentioned above in the quotation from the New York Maritime Register it is David Clark who, as the outstanding local builder of schooners, is most closely associated with our story here.

He was born at Alfred, Maine, on October 12, 1827. As a young man he came to Kennebunk, as did his brother Abner, where both youths went to work in the shipyard of Clement Littlefield in the Lower Village. When he was twenty-five he married Clement Littlefield's daughter Mary Frances. He was an ambitious young man eager to make his mark in his chosen profession and by the time he was thirty years of age was master builder in the yard. The first vessel built under his superintendence was a small two-masted schooner named, appropriately enough, *Wide Awake*, and launched in 1857. During the following twenty years he carried on shipbuilding operations in what was the Littlefield yard, the last vessel he built there being the bark *Hannah W. Dudley*.

About 1879 he bought the larger yard and more extensive facilities of Crawford & Ward located above the bridge in Kennebunkport, and transferred his operations to this site. For forty-four years after the launching of the little *Wide Awake*, he built ships, barks, schooners, sloops, and steamers, launching as many as ten vessels

Courtesy of Miss Alice M. Clark

David Clark (seated) and Captain William H. Gould of Kennebunkport during the construction of the schooner *Savannah*, 1901.

in a single year. In all he built nearly one hundred vessels, most of them in his own yard though occasionally he acted as master builder in other local shipyards. He is recorded on the official records as the master carpenter in charge of the construction of such famous square-riggers as the *Sorrento, Lepanto, Frank N. Thayer, Titan, Carrie Reed,* and *Reuce.*

In 1867 he built the first three-masted schooner launched from a local shipyard, the ill-starred *Jefferson Borden.* Of the twenty-eight three-masted schooners built on the Kennebunk River, David Clark built eleven, nearly twice as many as any other local builder. These included not only the first but also the largest. The latter was, moreover, the largest three-master built anywhere on the coast. He built two of the four four-masted schooners launched on the River.

"Uncle David" as he was affectionately known, lived to build ships. The sour smell of oak, the resinous fragrance of pine, the sound of the adze on timber and the ring of the caulker's mallet were all essential ingredients of his happiness. No doubt this accounts for the fact that long after he might have retired to enjoy the leisure earned by years of hard work, he continued to lay keels and launch new vessels and he kept at it to the very last.

His family recalls that during the last several years of his life, when he'd get a certain glint in his eye, a satisfied smile of anticipation on his face, and start to work with figures on paper, his good wife would say, "Now, David, you're not planning to build another vessel?" To which his reply would be, "Yes, dear, I think I'll build just one more." And so it was to the last year of his life, building just one more.

In 1900 Captain William H. Gould, who had spent his life in square-riggers left the ship *Challenger* and came home to Kennebunkport. The prospect of shorter voyages, closer to home, with interesting possibilities for profit, appealed to him and he decided to invest some of his savings in having a schooner built for his command. He went around to see "Uncle David" about it and before long a new keel was stretched in the Clark shipyard. This became the handsome little four-master *Savannah* which was launched in October, 1901. She was David Clark's last vessel, for the following year he died at the age of seventy-five. She was also the last vessel larger than a fisherman to be built on the River for the next fifteen years.

The passing of David Clark left only Charles Ward to carry on the tradition of shipbuilding on the Kennebunk River. He, too, had had a lifelong career as a builder of

wooden vessels, having assumed supervision of operations in his father's yard when his parent died. A native of Kennebunkport, Charles Ward built vessels in that town in association with William Crawford. With the sale of the Crawford & Ward yard to David Clark, he built a number of vessels in other local yards before accepting a position as master builder at a shipyard on the Potomac River at Alexandria. After a few years he returned to Maine and leased shipyard property in the Lower Village where he reestablished himself and continued to build wooden craft until 1918. His first contract on his return from Virginia was for the fine four-masted schooner *Sagamore* which he built in 1891. She was the largest of all the fore-and-afters built on the River. Thereafter he built a succession of fishing vessels, pleasure craft, menhaden steamers, and small barges until 1917 when he built the three-masted auxiliary-powered schooner *Charles B. Wiggin.*

The demand for ships occasioned by World War I was felt in Kennebunkport as in many other Maine coastal towns. Unfortunately for those concerned the impact was felt just too late to be profitable but in 1917 and 1918 two fair-sized schooners could be seen slowly taking shape on the River. George Clark, David's nephew, was engaged in the construction of a three-masted schooner in the old Clark shipyard. She towed from Kennebunkport to Gloucester in March, 1918. There she was sparred, rigged, sold and named *Edmund A. Billings.* In July, 1918 Charles Ward launched the hull of a small four-masted schooner, subsequently christened *Kennebunk,* and in so doing wrote "Finis" to large vessel construction on the River. Since that time fishing and pleasure craft have been the sole product of the few yards which have carried on the tradition of fine shipbuilding so firmly established by their predecessors.

The Jefferson Borden Mutiny

IN OCTOBER, 1867 David Clark launched the first three-masted schooner to be built on the Kennebunk River. She was owned in Fall River and bore the name *Jefferson Borden*. As though being the first of her kind in town was not sufficient distinction, the *Jefferson Borden* earned notoriety that made her name a by-word in the annals of crime on the high seas.

Her travels along the coast and offshore were without special note until the spring of 1875. On March 5th of that year she sailed from New Orleans for London under the command of Captain William Manson Patterson. Captain Patterson had his wife along as a passenger, his brother as mate and his cousin as second mate. The steward, four seamen and a French boy were the others on board. The voyage boded ill from the start. Before they were clear of the Mississippi one member of the crew, a Russian, was insubordinate and finally Captain Patterson clapped him in irons. After a couple of days confinement the sailor changed his mind about things and was released.

Nothing further of note took place until April 20 when the Russian sailor took the mate unawares one dark night, cracked his skull with an iron strap and with the aid of another sailor pitched the unconscious man overboard. Thereupon a third conspirator slipped forward and cut one of the jib sheets. He promptly set up a call for the second mate that a sheet had parted. The second mate went forward and both men climbed out on the jib boom to get the flapping sail under control. Only the sailor returned to the deck, the second mate having been pushed to his death off the spar. Meanwhile the arch-conspirator was aft at the cabin door telling the Captain who had retired that one of the sailors had broken his

leg and needed medical aid. The Captain noticed that the sailor had something concealed in his hand and when he got no response to his hails from either mate, he became suspicious that all was not as it should be. He wisely concluded to remain in the cabin until daylight, whereupon, armed with a shotgun and a revolver he set out to learn what had happened to his brother and cousin. For a time he got no answers from the three culprits who finally retreated into the forecastle where the Captain managed to lock them in. When they refused to submit he fired on them through the window and after one of them was wounded they admitted their deeds and surrendered.

By this time it was noon of the second day and the schooner meanwhile had been at the mercy of the seas with her wheel lashed. She required pumping but there weren't enough hands available to do the job as this was

Courtesy of Peabody Museum

The schooner *Jefferson Borden* entering Leghorn in 1868, as seen by an Italian artist.

in the days before steam pumps. Eight days later, the *Borden* fell in with a Norwegian bark from which Captain Patterson was able to recruit one sailor to help bring the schooner to port, and finally London was reached. The three mutineers were extradited to the United States and were tried for murder in Boston. Two were convicted and hanged, the third was convicted on a lesser charge and sentenced to prison.

Captain Patterson remained in the *Jefferson Borden* for many more years and the maritime reports of the day indicate that either he gave the schooner a hard time or vice versa, though nothing as serious as murder occurred again. In 1883 the schooner was sold and renamed *Arcana*. In January, 1885 she sailed from Portland for Bear River, N. S., but went ashore on a reef off the New Brunswick coast during a snow storm. Four of the crew managed to reach shore but froze to death before help came.

"Don't Give Up The Ship!"

THE most widely remembered case of premature abandonment of a vessel is that provided by the celebrated *Mary Celeste*. Surprising as it may seem there were a number of other abandoned vessels which were subsequently boarded by prize crews from other vessels and safely brought to port. Usually the cause for abandonment was more apparent than in the case of the *Mary Celeste* but if her crew had been rescued even that mystery would have proved no mystery at all and generations of story writers and old sailors would have been deprived of this excuse for exercise of their imaginations.

Of more interest here is the story involving the three-masted schooner *Annie M. Allen* following her abandonment in the spring of 1881. The *Allen* was built in the

Capt. N. L. Thompson shipyard in 1873 and hailed from Providence. On April 5, 1881 a British steamer rescued the crew of the *Allen* which was reported as being in a sinking condition while on a voyage from Sagua to New York. Two days later in latitude 35.20 N., longitude 65 W., the *Allen* was fallen in with by the Nova Scotia brig *Athol Cran*. The schooner was hove to under main storm trysail and her drogue was out forward. The mate and two sailors from the brig were put on board. They found four feet of water in the hold, the taffrail and spanker boom broken and part of the fore and main topmasts carried away. Her chronometer (which was stopped), nautical instruments and charts were found in the cabin with all the provisions and stores. The vessel was sound and had a good set of pumps. The three men from the brig set out to bring the schooner to port but ten days later, after a further dusting by the weather, they, too, had had enough and were taken off by another schooner.

The following day the British steamer *Elysia*, bound from New York for London, fell in with the *Allen*. The master of the steamer put his second mate and eight seamen aboard the schooner and towed her to Halifax. When the steamer's prize crew went aboard they found the mizzenmast of the schooner gone at the deck, the fore topmast and most of the standing rigging carried away, and all the sails gone except the flying jib. The chronometer, a quantity of provisions and the boats were gone, but some spare sails were found in a locker. They pumped her free of water and apparently had little difficulty in keeping her free during the tow to Halifax. On arrival there her cargo was discharged and only about a third of it was found damaged. The schooner was repaired at a cost of between $7,000 and $8,000 and the steamer was awarded $6,500 salvage.

In an editorial, a contemporary issue of the New York Maritime Register had this to say of the case:

> "Why was this vessel abandoned? Her condition could not have been so very bad when a prize crew of three men were willing to take charge of her, and when a steamer found little difficulty in taking her into port . . . Criminal intent might be charged at first, but incompetence and cowardice are probably the most prominent causes . . ."

As for the *Allen*, she lasted until October, 1904 when she sprang a leak off Cape Ann. Her crew worked her to a point off Gloucester Harbor, where, being unable to control the leak, they abandoned her. She stranded on the beach at Gloucester and was subsequently stripped by wreckers.

George V. Jordan, Deepwaterman

IT IS an oft-expressed generalization that schooners were not satisfactory for deepwater transoceanic voyages, but like most over-simplifications there is plenty of specific evidence to disprove it. It cannot be denied that a number of large schooners have had a bad time of it on deepwater passages but the difficulty must be attributed to the particular type and size of schooner rather than to all fore-and-afters.

The belief had rise in the character of the schooner rig and the fullness of the hulls usually found in these coasters. The larger schooners especially were designed very full and flat through the midship section to give them sufficient stability to sail without cargo or ballast. This was, of course, a great economic advantage over square-riggers which could not be moved with empty holds, but it also produced a hull which would change the direction of its roll in a seaway with a vigorous snap.

Courtesy of Peabody Museum

The schooner *George V. Jordan*, veteran of many deepwater voyages is seen here on the Mystic River in company with the barkentines *Altona* and *Rachel Emery* (left).

With the schooner rig, while it is possible to control the movement and position of the boom at the foot of each sail, it is not possible to control the swinging of the gaff at the top of the sail. When the wind is light there is often not enough pressure against the sails to hold the gaffs rigid against the roll of the hull, and when gaffs begin to slat back and forth they often break and damage the sails. The alternative is to let the sails run down until the breeze increases, and allow the vessel to roll unrestrained, but you cannot make voyages with sails furled when you need every puff of wind that blows. The conditions described above are more often encountered on deepwater passages where you cannot depend on the prevailing winds of the coast. Hence the conclusion that schooners are unsuited to transoceanic voyages.

Despite all this the records are full of reports of long and successful deepwater voyages by schooners, particularly by three-masters. One noteworthy example of this is provided by the schooner *George V. Jordan*, a craft of 700 tons, built by David Clark in 1874. To take advantage of the trade winds on her long voyages the *Jordan* carried a yard on her foremast which doubtless improved her sailing qualities when the wind was aft.

On at least two occasions she made voyages lasting two years before returning home. In December, 1887 she sailed from Boston for Sydney, N.S.W. (Australia), where she arrived after an excellent passage of 96 days. From there she sailed to Newcastle, N.S.W. and loaded coal for San Diego, California, where she arrived three months later. Proceeding to Port Townsend, Washington, she took a cargo of lumber back to Australia. By now it was February, 1889 and she sailed from Newcastle for Haiphong and Hong Kong. After leaving Hong Kong in July she survived a typhoon in the China Sea during which her sails were blown away. A month later, in the South Pacific, she was caught in a terrific squall which blew away the foresail and gaff, smashed the main trestle-trees and did a good deal of damage on deck. After a passage of 137 days from Hong Kong she arrived back in New York on the eighteenth of December, 1889.

Another two-year voyage took the *Jordan* from New York to Port Elizabeth, South Africa. From there she went to London and back to Port Elizabeth. She proceeded to Colombo, Ceylon, where she took on a partial cargo and picked up the remainder at Cochin China, arriving back in New York almost exactly two years after her departure.

Lavinia Was A Lady

IN NOVEMBER, 1882, the New York Maritime Register reported, "Captain Charles N. Franklin is to have built a new three-masted schooner. She will be built by David Clark at Kennebunkport and will be first class in every respect, finished and furnished with all modern appliances." Thus appeared the first public notice of what was destined to be one of the most handsome vessels ever built here and one of the finest schooners on the coast. At the time of her launching on July 3, 1883 she was the largest schooner ever built on the River. Christened *Lavinia Campbell* she is described in contemporary accounts as 160 feet on the keel, 190 feet from taffrail to the extreme end of her bowsprit, 37 feet wide and 17 feet deep. "The masts are of Oregon pine, 94 feet long and 28 inches in diameter with scarcely a knot from one end to the other. Her cost is estimated at $45,000."

Courtesy of S.P.N.E.A.

The beautiful *Lavinia Campbell* bound for Boston with coal. When she left her builder's yard in 1883 she was painted white but did not long remain so. Probably few vessels survived so many collisions as did this smart sailer.

Designed and built for the coal trade, her activities were confined quite strictly to that business but what it lacked in the excitement of far-away ports was more than offset by an oversized share of mishaps and casualties. When only three months old and enroute from Philadelphia to Boston with 1150 tons of coal, she ran ashore on the south side of Block Island.

> "The south patrol of the Block Island (Life Saving Service) Station at 5 o'clock in the morning discovered through the fog a light three-quarters of a mile south of the station. It was from a vessel ashore in the breakers. The weather was very foggy with heavy squalls of wind and rain, accompanied by an ugly and fearful sea. The surf-boat was hauled opposite the vessel and when about to be launched, the relatives and friends of the keeper and crew begged them not to attempt going out in such a heavy sea, declaring that it would be only imperiling their lives for nothing as it would be impossible for them to reach the vessel and if they did, no boat could land amid the rocks in such a surf. This discouragement had no effect upon the station crew for the boat was launched and reached the vessel in safety. She proved to be the *Lavinia Campbell* of Greenport, N. Y. . . . and had a crew of eight persons all of whom were safely landed. . . . The next day the schooner was again boarded by the station crew who got out the cabin furniture and crew's clothing and loosed the sails to dry. A wrecking company succeeded two days later in extracating the vessel from the rocks and took her to Newport, R. I."[3]

At Newport temporary repairs were effected and she was towed to Boston where her cargo was discharged and she was drydocked for permanent repairs.

On the night of August 31, 1886 while anchored between Pollock Rip and Shovelfull Lightships in the Vineyard, the *Campbell* was run into by another three-

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[3] U. S. Life Saving Service. *Annual Report.* (Washington, 1884).

master whose commander was the ancestor of the modern hit-and-run driver. He didn't pause to identify himself and left the *Campbell* without jib boom or headgear.

In January, 1889 while lying at anchor below Baltimore with a full cargo of coal for Boston and waiting for a fair wind, the *Campbell* had the misfortune to be rammed by a British steamer which cut deeply into her stern, carrying away the whole starboard quarter. She filled rapidly and sank in shoal water to which she was towed by one of the then ever-present tugs. A few days later she was patched and raised, towed to a local shipyard and repaired.

Ten months later while bound for Boston from Norfolk, the *Campbell* collided in the dark with an unknown bark, an encounter that stove her boat, carried away her port rail, mizzen rigging and davits.

On the night of September 7, 1892 while sailing down Boston Harbor bound for Belfast, Maine, the *Campbell* ran into the four-masted schooner *Ebeneezer Haggett* which was at anchor. She smashed things aft on the *Haggett*, her long jib boom acting like a scythe and sweeping everything before it. The *Campbell* suffered only minor damage and after getting clear, proceeded to Belfast leaving the *Haggett* to nurse her wounds.

Up and down the coast shuttled the *Campbell* bringing coal to New England's mills and electric light plants. But she seemed marked for bad luck and although her splendid design let her establish a reputation as a smart sailer, and her rugged construction enabled her to withstand the worst fate had dealt her thus far, the next collision was too much.

Early in the morning of September 13, 1901 the *Campbell* was sailing up the Delaware toward Phila-

delphia where she was to load another cargo. The deep-laden four-masted schooner *Cassie F. Bronson* was sailing down the Bay bound for Bangor. The two schooners came together with a fearful crash. The *Campbell* was cut through forward of the mizzen rigging and capsized in about fifteen minutes. Full of water and on her beam ends, she drifted up the Bay until she grounded on a shoal. The *Bronson* lost her jibboom, fore-topmast and all her headgear. Her stem was also damaged and she had to tow back to Philadelphia for repairs. But the deed was done. Early hopes for salvaging the *Campbell* soon faded when the extent of the damage became apparent and she was abandoned, her hull and fittings stripped by wreckers for what they would bring.

Bradford Was A Titan

OF THE fifteen hundred three-masted schooners built between Calais, Maine, and Orange, Texas, the largest of them all was the *Bradford C. French,* built for Taunton owners by David Clark in 1884. She was a powerful vessel of more than 900 tons and would carry 1700 tons of coal. Larger than many four-masters, her sails were necessarily large and cumbersome and her gear of the heaviest.

The *French* was one of the very few large vessels built on the River that ever came back to her birthplace. In January, 1886, while discharging coal at Portland, she took fire in her boiler room and sustained considerable damage in her forward compartment. Towed to Kennebunkport, she was repaired by her builder.

If ever a vessel was built to last, it was the *French.* When she was about twenty-five years old she was taken to Nova Scotia and "retopped" or rebuilt above the waterline. This gave her a new lease on life but ulti-

mately the old and newer sections of the hull began to get along badly with one another and she became seriously strained and leaky.

Under normal circumstances she would doubtless have been condemned but the shortage of vessels and the high freights occasioned by World War I kept her in service. Her last commander, Captain O. R. Farrell, tells an amusing and interesting tale of his experiences in the old *French*. He recalls how in 1915, when the *French* was thirty-one years old, he was "on the beach" having had his last ship founder at sea, and went into the office of a prominent Boston shipowner in search of a command. The only thing offered was the *French*, then discharging a lumber cargo in Boston and chartered to load coal at Newport News for Rio de Janeiro. Her present master, a prudent man, had refused to make such a trip in her.

"I had to have a job so I agreed to go in her," relates Captain Farrell. "We towed out of Boston in a light fair wind and as we went down the harbor we commenced to set sail. Finally we set the spanker, a real brute of a sail it was too, with double sheets. Outside there was a little swell running and she'd roll with it. When she did, that whoppin' big spanker would fetch up first one way and then the other, and the whole stern of that schooner would twist with it. Just like one of them Cuban rhumba dancers. I hollered to the mate, 'Haul that thing down before she tears the stern off'n her.' We went down to Newport News in four days and we never did set that spanker.

"When we got there the oakum was hanging out of her like Spanish moss. You couldn't keep it in the seams, she worked so. The owners sent their port captain over to look at her and I said to him, 'I'm not going out to Rio in this old bundle of roots.'

Courtesy of R. E. Hildebrand

This photo of the *Bradford C. French* shows her as she was in 1910 subsequent to being "retopped." Originally she was a flush-deck vessel with a box rail extending from bow to stern.

" 'Why not?' he demanded.

" 'She's half full of water now with no cargo in her. What'll she be when she's loaded with coal!'

" 'Now Farrell,' he says, 'it's summertime. Go ahead and if you come back, no doubt they'll give you something better.'

" 'If I come back, eh? So that's the way you feel about it too.' But I figured to go through with the job. And, since you couldn't keep oakum in the seams, they installed a gasoline-driven pump in the midship house. Between that and the steam pump forward we were supposed to pump the whole Atlantic Ocean through her on the way to Rio. Anyway we started out with 1650 tons of coal and by keeping the pumps going continuously we got out to Rio in 72 days. That old thing could really sail when you dared to keep sail on her.

"We went from Rio to Jamaica and loaded logwood for Philadelphia. I put a deck-load on her ten feet high and still made the trip in 16 days. When we arrived I called the owner in Boston and he says, 'Farrell, you done well. I never expected to see that vessel back.'

" 'Oh,' says I, 'you sent me out there to drown me. Well, you can have her.' But then he offered me more money and some promises if I'd stay another trip, so we loaded coal again for Cuba. Then we went to Orange, Texas, and took on a lumber cargo for San Juan, Porto Rico. There we loaded molasses and alcohol for New Orleans and that was when the old *French* ran out of borrowed time. It was early in July, 1916, in the Gulf of Mexico that the hurricane struck us. Ninety miles south of Mobile Bar that old thing just dissolved. She lasted through the hurricane with ten feet of water in her. The midship house was smashed; the mainmast partners all broken and the mast waving around; the molasses leaked and clogged the pumps. Oh, she was a physical wreck! We abandoned her in the yawl boat after the hurricane passed and using a blanket for a sail, we sailed about 250 miles and landed five days later at Panama City, Fla."

The Dainty Julia Frances

IN CONTRAST to the *Bradford C. French* was a series of three dainty little three-masters, all very much alike, designed by Captain Zebina Chase of New Bedford and built by Clark between 1882 and 1889. They were called *Joseph G. Dean, Pardon G. Thompson,* and *Julia Frances.* These were small (only about 110 feet long) shoal-draft vessels built for New Bedford and Fall River owners for the southern fruit and oyster trade. On occasion, one or more of them was employed as a supply ship to the whaling fleet, their purpose being to carry food and other supplies to the Azores where the New Bedford whalers could pick them up and continue their far-flung operations without returning home.

Of the three, the *Julia Frances* is best remembered on the coast for her reputation for speed. All three were so shallow that as one old sailor put it, "They'd pretty nigh sail on a heavy dew" and needed only the lightest airs to keep under way.

An amusing anecdote that throws a good deal of light on coasting as it was fifty years ago and the rivalry between vessels and masters is related by the late Captain Perry Alley, one-time master of the schooner *James Boyce.*

"I hove into Chatham in the *James Boyce* one night with a load of stone. My mate was Bill Adams who used to go in the *Lavolta* and Bill had been sayin' as how he wished we'd fall in with the *Lavolta* because she was a right smart sailer an' he'd like a race with her. I got up early next mornin' and had a look around an' there was the *Lavolta* loaded with stone, same as us. 'Ho, Bill,' says I, 'Here's the *Lavolta.* Guess you're goin' to git what you wanted.'

"All the vessels in the harbor got ready to pull out but had to wait for the tide to turn so's to get over the shoals. They all started with *Lavolta* leadin' the pack. When they got to the shoals there waren't water enough and they had to wait some more. I started in the *Boyce* and tried to hold her back but come acrackin' right down into the middle of the fleet. We finally worked out over the shoals, passin' first one vessel an' then another until we was up behind the *Lavolta*. We was carryin' lower sails, fore staysail, jib an' flyin' jib and the spanker topsail. The Cap'n of the *Lavolta* saw us comin' an' started to break out his outer jib. I watched her through the glass an' says to Bill, 'Well, mebbe if she's got good riggin' she can stand it, but I doubt it.'

" 'Oh, she's got good riggin,' says Adams.

Courtesy of S.P.N.E.A.

The trim little *Julia Frances* warping through the old bridge after being launched from the Clark shipyard. The year: 1889.

"That outer jib hadn't been set long when the whole foretopmast come acrackin' down over the side and the wreckage had to be got in and cleared away, which it was quite smartly. We passed the *Lavolta* at Pollock Rip Lightship and at the end of the day she was hull down astern.

"The next night we put into harbor (he didn't say where, but probably Vineyard Haven) and there was the *Julia Frances*, supposed to be the next fastest vessel after the *Lavolta*. She was loaded with stone too. The *Lavolta* came in later during the night and eighteen more coasters all bound through Long Island Sound for New York. 'Well,' says I, 'here's a good one for tomorrow, with both the *Lavolta* and the *Julia Frances* here.'

"Next mornin' the fleet got under way. We had to wait for the tide to turn to get through the narrows. Finally we started in the *Boyce* and passed one vessel after another until there was only three ahead of us: the *Lavolta*, and a big Nova Scotiaman loaded with lumber who was sockin' the sail to her somethin' awful and had her lee rail under, and the *Julia Frances* in the lead. The tide was just right when the *Frances* reached the narrows and she went whoopin' through. It put her about seven miles ahead of us. We passed the *Lavolta* and then overtook the big Novey who was crowdin' on sail. As soon as we passed her, she began reefin'. The *Frances* was well in the lead but we kep' on tryin'. Long after dark up in the Sound I spotted a light to leeward. It was the *Frances* an' I yelled through the speakin' trumpet, 'Why don't you pull up your anchor an' come on to New York?' 'You go to Hell,' came back the reply faintly over the water."[4]

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[4] Conversation reported by Ernest S. Dodge, Salem, Mass.

The Tragic End of the Louis V. Place

ON AUGUST 30, 1890 the town turned out to witness the launching of the big three-master *Louis V. Place* from the George Christenson shipyard on the west shore of the River. The loss of this vessel less than five years later provides one of the most harrowing tales in the annals of the U. S. Life Saving Service.

On January 28, 1895 the *Place* sailed from Baltimore under the command of Captain William Squires, bound for New York with 1100 tons of coal. It was not until the fourth of February that the wind favored and she passed the capes at the mouth of the Chesapeake with a frseh breeze. The weather, though crisp, was clear but the sea was rough and soon after the schooner cleared the capes, the wind veered to NNW, blowing hard and the sky became overcast with thick clouds. All the light sails were furled and the vessel stood on her course during the rest of the night under lower sails only. The next morning the gale had increased to such force that the sails were reefed down with the exception of the foresail which was so stiff with ice that the sailors could not handle it. By this time the air was biting cold and the rigging, sails, and entire hull of the vessel had gathered so much ice that she was kept under control only with the greatest difficulty. She held her course, however, and the next day conditions improved enough to permit the crew to shake out the reefs and beat some of the ice off her so she was able to do better.

On the morning of February 7, three days after passing out the Chesapeake, the gale shifted to the northeast, blowing with great violence and the weather again became very thick. The sails were reefed once more and the vessel labored heavily until two o'clock on the morning of the eighth when the tempest hauled to the west-

Courtesy of Mr. & Mrs. R. L. Smith

The ill-fated *Louis V. Place* leaving the ways at the George Christenson shipyard, August 30, 1890.

ward, raging with greater fury than ever and causing a wild and very dangerous cross sea. The crew had now had four days and nights of bitter exposure and were very nearly worn out.

At this time the position of the *Place* was wholly a matter of conjecture but Captain Squires thought he was not far from Sandy Hook. By seven o'clock his vessel was little better than a drifting iceberg — almost wholly unmanageable, her running gear frozen in the blocks, her sails as stiff as boards, and her deck sheathed with ice.

Confident that he could not be far from the land, the Captain had the lead hove and finding eight fathoms, decided to anchor and try to ride out the storm. But the anchors were frozen onto the deck and the sailors could not free them. As it was impossible to change course, the halliards were cut so that the sails might run down if they would, but they were so rigid with ice that they

stood upright in their places as before. Nothing more could be done. Ten minutes later they were in the breakers on the back side of Long Island, and a few moments later the vessel lay pounding on the bar, the seas combing over every inch of the hull, and the crew took to the rigging for their lives.

About five minutes before the stranding she was discovered by a surfman of the Lone Hill Station who was on watch. His own station crew being already engaged at the wreck of another schooner not far distant, he telephoned for assistance from the two nearest stations of the Life Saving Service and both started for the wreck of the *Place* with their boats and Lyle guns.

The stranded vessel lay between 300 and 400 yards from the beach. The sea was sweeping her from end to end and her crew could be seen in the mizzen rigging at intervals when the atmosphere was not obscured by snow squalls. Three were standing in the shrouds just above the sheerpole, one still higher, and two on the crosstrees. The tide was at flood, the surf very heavy, filled with a grinding mass of porridge ice two feet thick, while the beach was strewn with great cakes of ice piled in some places to a height of six and eight feet.

Just as the life saving crew were placing their Lyle gun in position for firing, two of the men in the rigging were seen to fall into the sea and disappear. The first line landed fairly on the vessel, but across the foretopmast stay and dropped down onto the jibboom too far from the sailors to be useful. A second, third, and fourth line was laid across the wreck but still the benumbed sailors made no visible attempt to reach the line. Another squall set in and when it was over two more men had disappeared from the rigging. A fifth and then a sixth line was fired across the wreck just before dark but the men in the rig-

Courtesy of The Mariners' Museum

All that remained of the *Louis V. Place* after stranding on Long Island during a blizzard in February, 1895.

ging did not stir. Darkness was now at hand. The night was wild and intensely cold and while it seemed impossible that anyone could survive such exposure in the rigging, the life saving crew stood by and kept a fire burning on the beach.

When daylight broke there were only two living men in the riggin, the third and fourth were frozen to death still lashed in the rigging, one of them swinging head downward at the mercy of the gale. A seventh, eighth, and then a ninth line was laid across the wreck and one of the survivors tried without success to haul the line out. It was not apparent that nobody was going to be saved by means of a breeches buoy and it was still impossible to launch a surfboat. It was now the middle of the afternoon of the second day. As the tide began to rise, how-

ever, the courageous crew of surfmen took their boat from the wagon and tried repeatedly to launch it, but each time the sea hurled it back upon the shore. A last attempt was made at sunset and when that failed the crew rested, waiting the first opportunity.

At midnight the surf had fallen a little and the tide had receded. Once more they stood by to make a launch. At last with a mighty rush they set the boat afloat and before long their powerful arms had laid her safely alongside the wreck. The two survivors made their tortuous way to the surfboat and were brought ashore more dead than alive. Their condition was pitiful, their faces, necks, hands and feet frozen. Despite the best efforts of first aid and medical attention only one of the men survived the terrible ordeal.[5]

The Sagamore Plucks a Captain From His Bridge

ON THE night of May 10, 1907 the handsome big four-master *Sagamore* was bowling along in Vineyard Sound before a strong northwest wind. According to her master she was logging eleven knots despite being deep-laden with 2200 tons of coal for Boston. The night was clear and all was well. Suddenly the port running light of a steamer loomed up dead ahead almost under the schooner's bows. There was no time to put the helm up and the schooner smashed headlong into the Norwegian tramp steamer *Edda*, bound for Newark with a cargo of plaster. The long jib boom of the *Sagamore* swept the steamer's bridge and somehow the Norwegian skipper, sensing that his own vessel was doomed, grasped the intruding spar, and when the vessels separated in the dark-

[5] U. S. Life Saving Service. *Annual Report* (Washington 1896).

ness, he managed to clamber aboard the schooner. For a time it was believed that the steamer had sunk with all hands but the next day she was discovered beached on Squash Meadow Shoal with a terrible rent in her side. Captain Trefry of the *Sagamore* thought his vessel undamaged as none of her headgear was carried away, but in a few moments, it became apparent that there was underwater damage as she commenced to settle lower and lower. When the water in the hold reached a depth of seven feet the schooner was abandoned and Captain Trefry, his wife, the Norwegian captain and the schooner's crew landed at Oak Bluff in the yawl boat. The next morning all that was to be seen of the *Sagamore* was the topmasts with sail still set, projecting above the surface of the Sound.

Courtesy of Mrs. Grace N. FitzPatrick

The schooner *Kennebunk* shortly after launching from Ward's shipyard on July 10, 1918. The last large vessel built on the Kennebunk River, she was sparred and rigged at Gloucester. The ways from which she took the water may be seen at the extreme right.

Three- and Four-Masted Schooners Built on the Kennebunk River

Year	Masts	Name	Tonnage	Builder	Home Port
1867	3	Jefferson Borden	563	David Clark	Fall River
1872	3	Earl P. Mason	535	W. H. Crawford	Providence
	3	William H. Andrews	189	W. H. Crawford	Philadelphia
	3	Lemuel Hall	522	David Clark	Fall River
1873	3	J. J. Moore	411	Benj. Jackson[2]	Orient, N. Y.
	3	Wyoming	197	David Clark	Boston
	3	John D. Williams	542	Thomas Emery, Jr.[2]	New York
	3	Annie M. Allen	451	Benj. Jackson[2]	Providence
	3	Albert W. Smith	602	Benj. Jackson[2]	Providence
	3	John N. Gamewell	535	Benj. Jackson[2]	New York
	3	Florence Dean	562	David Clark	Taunton
	3	Mathilde Kranz	751	W. H. Crawford	Provincetown
	3	Carrie Belle	274	W. H. Crawford	Kennebunk
1874	3	George V. Jordan	697	David Clark	Boston
	3	Ellen Tobin[1]	435	Thomas Emery, Jr.[2]	Jersey City
	3	J. M. Leonard	408	Mark Poole[2]	Somerset
	3	Joseph F. Baker	464	W. H. Crawford	Sag Harbor
	3	Julia A. Ward	591	W. H. Crawford	Provincetown

[1] Renamed *Mary Curtis*, 1894.

[2] Master carpenter at the shipyard of Capt. N. L. Thompson.

Three- and Four-Masted Schooners Built on the Kennebunk River (*Continued*)

Year	Masts	Name	Tonnage	Builder	Home Port
1882	3	Joseph G. Dean	154	David Clark	New Bedford
1883	3	Lavinia Campbell	697	David Clark	Greenport, N. Y.
1884	3	Bradford C. French	920	David Clark	Taunton
	3	Pardon G. Thompson	163	David Clark	New Bedford
1889	3	Julia Frances	183	David Clark	Fall River
1890	3	Golden Ball	286	David Clark	New Bedford
	3	Louis V. Place	735	Geo. Christenson	New York
1891	4	Sagamore	1,284	Charles Ward	Fall River
	4	Eagle Wing	1,204	David Clark	Fall River
	3	Nimrod	294	Geo. Christenson	Boston
1901	4	Savannah	584	David Clark	Portland
1917	3	Charles B. Wiggin[3] (Aux.)	299	Charles Ward	Gloucester
1918	3	Edmund A. Billings[4]	334	George Clark	——
	4	Kennebunk	719	Charles Ward	Calais, Me.

[3] Sold 1918 to French owners and renamed *M.F.A.*

[4] Renamed *Mathilde* of New York, 1919. Placed under Portuguese flag 1920.

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